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ABSTRACT

This guide discusses personal causation theory (the initiation by an individual of behavior intended to produce a change in the environment) and its application in a theoretical framework for courses in educational psychology. The work of deCharms, Fielder, Koenigs, and Muir is explored as the theoretical background for classroom applications of the model. Classroom exercises are provided as examples of how the motivation of teacher education students can be enhanced while they are learning how to motivate their future pupils: (1) writing for 10 minutes, (2) connecting a dot-to-dot design according to purposely ambiguous directions, and (3) completing puzzles. This approach is suggested as suitable for either graduate or undergraduate students. (AG)

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Using Motivational Theories as a Focus for the Educational Psychology Curriculum

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to describe how theories of intrinsic motivation can be employed as theoretical frameworks for courses in educational psychology. Drawing from the work of deCharms, Deci, Lepper and Greene, and McClelland, the author describes how the motivation of teacher education students can be enhanced while they are learning how to motivate their future pupils. The theoretical perspective is explained and several examples of classroom exercises designed to provide motivational experiences are discussed. The approach described is applicable for undergraduate or graduate classes and can also be utilized as a conceptual framework for teacher education programs.

Introduction

Until recently Abraham Maslow's (1968, 1970) hierarchy of needs was the only theory of motivation addressed in undergraduate educational psychology textbooks. Approaches to maintaining discipline in the classroom by applying principles derived from learning theories were included under the heading of motivation. Fortunately, these shortcomings have been redressed as contemporary textbook authors surveying the field incorporate into their manuscripts psychological advances in the field of intrinsic motivation. The topic of motivation no longer plays the secondary role it traditionally did, but rarely is the topic employed as a subsuming one as are developmental (Sprinthall & Sprinthall, 1974), learning (Bigge, 1982; Hall, 1982) or personality and social (Gage & Berliner, 1979) theories. The purpose of this paper is to describe how the topic of intrinsic motivation can be used as the theoretical framework to guide the undergraduate educational psychology curriculum in teacher education. Specifically, how deCharms' (1968, 1976) theory of personal causation is employed conceptually to guide a semester long course will be explained. Three exercises which provide undergraduate students with personal experiences of the motivation process will be discussed. These exercises were developed from concepts derived from deCharms' (1968, 1976), Deci's (1975) and Lepper and Greene's (1978) research.

Theoretical Framework

Personal Causation Theory

Personal causation (deCharms, 1968, 1976) is "the initiation by an individual of behavior intended to produce a change in the environment" (deCharms, 1968, p.6). It is a motivational construct which describes the experiences persons have when they are initiating, in control of, and responsible for their own actions. When individuals engage in activities by choice, they are considered Origins. In contrast, a "Pawn is a person who perceives his behavior as determined by ... forces beyond his control" (deCharms, 1968, pp. 273-274). Whether one has Origin or Pawn experiences depends on the amount of freedom allowed or structured imposed in the environment. The concepts have repeatedly been subjected to empirical test and the results consistently demonstrate that under Origin conditions, persons feel more freedom, task enjoyment, and motivation to continue than they do under Pawn conditions. When applied to the educational setting the research has demonstrated that teachers who know how to conduct their classrooms by including these motivational concepts (compared to teachers who do not) have students who come to school more often and on time (deCharms, 1976), score higher on tests of academic achievement (deCharms, 1976; Fiedler, 1975; Koenigs, Fiedler & deCharms, 1977), and take personal responsibility for their actions (Muir, 1977). Programs have been conducted to help teachers understand the concepts and to show them how to use them (Cohen, 1979; Cohen, Emrich & deCharms, 1976-1977; deCharms, 1976). Educational psychology instructors can apply the concepts and strive for a similar impact at two levels: for their students and for the future pupils of these students.

A Contradiction in the Curriculum

The undergraduate experience is one of requirement. Educational psychology courses are required as part of the teacher certification process and only infrequently do students choose to include such courses as electives in their college programs. Consequently, students enrolled in educational psychology courses (or any other required class) quickly assess the course syllabus and develop strategies for meeting requirements. The strategies they develop are dependent on their perceptions of the instructors' expectations. To meet these expectations sufficiently, students press their professors to impose enough structure upon assignments so that students will be able to submit work which fulfills their professors' expectations. The result of this process, in the extreme, is that submitted products approach equality and do not reflect the individuality of their producers. With today's emphasis on accountability, this is not surprising. However, rather than manifest a student's motivation to strive to master course content in order to meet his or her personal goals within the undergraduate curriculum, the process reflects a concern for conformity and a dependence on the instructor's imposed goals. In deCharms' (1968) terminology the result of this process is that students' behaviors may be more Pawn-like than they are Origin-like.

The Proposal

The Model

One goal of using personal causation theory in teacher preparation educational psychology classes is to provide an alternative structure for students' perceptions and instructors' expectations. Another goal is to enhance the teacher preparation process by furnishing a model of the teacher who incorporates principles of motivation into his or her teaching. The behavioral changes

manifest by instructor and students thus mirror those behaviors that would be found in the elementary or secondary classrooms of teachers who successfully motivate their pupils.

Accomplishing these goals logically requires two levels. First, the course instructor must be well-versed in and committed to principles of motivation change. This entails understanding both McClelland's (1965; McClelland & Winter, 1971) and deCharms' (1968, 1976) approaches to enhancing motivation. Second, the course instructor must know how to apply these approaches to his or her students in order to guide them to incorporate the principles into their personal lives and their developing teaching styles.

The first level is guided by the dictum that to help someone else become more motivated, a person must first understand his or her own motives. Motivation cannot be imposed or required. It must be actively chosen as a goal worth striving for. Emulating a motivated person's mode of operation entails knowing and learning how to act as that person does. According to deCharms (1968, 1976) Origins have six characteristics which set them apart from Pawns. They are (a) internally in control of their actions and (b) set goals which are (c) realistic. Origins (d) know how to engage in activity to meet their goals, (e) assume responsibility for their successes and failures, and do so (f) with a sense of self-confidence. According to McClelland and Winter (1971) the person motivated by a strong need to achieve sets moderate goals, appreciates and uses concrete feedback to assess and formulate his or her actions, takes initiative, and prefers situations where he or she can be in control of events and assume responsibility for them.

Learning these new behaviors to accomplish the second level mentioned

above requires attention to four areas: self study, goal setting, principles of motivation, and transfer to the classroom. These areas are derived from the training programs conducted by deCharms and McClelland and their colleagues. Although a training program which attends to these components is well beyond the scope of a semester long educational psychology course, activities which incorporate elements of motivation change projects can be included in the curriculum. Suggestions for implementation follow in the final section of this paper.

Application to the Curriculum

Many of the activities used to engage persons in self study of their motives are experiential. This is consistent with the notion that one's knowledge is enhanced by actual participation and involvement in the concepts. Self study is a continuous process, but also serves as an introduction for other elements of motivational change. Reflecting on questions of an introspective nature must occur before one is able to set goals for changing. Goal setting subsumes a number of processes including planning future directions and learning how to make choices and decisions of both a long and short term nature. Both of these elements can be included early in an educational psychology class.

Usually on the first day of class students are asked to provide their professors with identifying information such as academic major, identification and telephone numbers. At this time they can also be asked to write down goals specific to educational psychology that each has for the term. These goals will be analyzed in motivational terminology in subsequent meeting times. The major introduction to motivation concepts occurs in the second

class session which is devoted to introducing personal causation theory (deCharms, 1968) by means of an experiential exercies. During this class students are asked first to write about a learning experience they had which was truly motivating. They are to describe the situation and to describe the feelings associated with the situation. These ten-minute themes are for their personal use. They are not to be turned in to the professor and will only be shared with others by choice. Next, a paper with a dot-to-dot design is individually distributed to each student and the class is instructed that they will be participating in an exercise designed to determine if they know how to follow directions accurately. The directions which follow are highly structured, somewhat ambiguous, and intentionally purposeless and tension producing. Students can only connect dots if the direction to do so has been given. Directives continue for ten minutes, the same length of time devoted to writing about a personal experience. Finally, once the instructor has broken the ice of the following directions routine, a discussion ensues in which the two conditions are contrasted in terms of emotions, goals, activity level, commitment, liking of the tasks and desire to continue each. The Origin and Pawn terms are then introduced and applied to the situation, the students attitudes and behaviors to learning, and their future roles as teachers.

During the next class students analyze their initially stated goals for the semester to see how the goals reflect each student's motivational propensities. This includes attention to whether the goals belong to the student or instructor, if the goals are realistic, and what the instrumental activity to the goal will consist of . These aspects of goal setting are explained in terms of personal causation theory and elucidated by discussing the relevance of the theory to teacher and student interactions in elementary and

secondary schools and in higher education. Class members are encouraged to relate the terms, Origin, Pawn, and goal-setting to themselves as learners and also as future teachers. Personal causation theory thus provides the class with a frame of reference that can be used in future discussions of other educational issues. For example, the concepts of freedom, choice, and commitment provide an organizing comparative focus for viewing theories of learning, instruction, and development. Students begin to see contradictions, for example, when they examine approaches to behavior management such as behavior modification and they see consistency when, for example, they learn of Glasser's (1969) approach to behavior change or study Bruner's (1966) stages of representing information.

An intriguing challenge to students is presented later in the semester during a simulation exercise which provides a transition from theories of learning and principles of behavior modification to alternative theories of intrinsic motivation. This third example is derived from Deci's (1975) and Lepper and Greene's (1978) work on the effects of extrinsic reinforcement on intrinsic motivation. The class is divided into two groups in two locations and all students are given identical puzzles to solve individually. The puzzles are designed to be intrinsically motivating (done for no apparent external reward), but one of the groups is structured so that students earn points for each time they complete the puzzle which has infinite solutions. After working with the puzzles for twenty minutes, the groups are told to take a brief break before returning to the lecture hall with their puzzles. Each group is then observed to see who takes a break and how many continue to play with the puzzle and for how long. Motivational theory predicts that only those with instructions to find a solution will continue to play with the puzzle.

Results are then shared with the students who generate hypotheses to explain them. Applications to the classroom, especially in regard to utilizing reinforcement indiscriminately are discussed.

These three activities are examples of how theories of motivation can subsume the educational psychology curriculum. Other examples are abundant, but impractical to include in a brief paper. Suggestions to operationalize McClelland's (1965) and deCharms' (1968) ideas for motivational change projects are available in several sources. Activities appropriate for adults, teachers, or preparing teachers can be found in McClelland and Winter (1971), deCharms (1976), Cohen, Emrich and deCharms (1976-1977), and Cohen (1979). Examples of activities which have been developed for elementary and secondary pupils can be found in the work of Alschuler and his colleagues (1970, 1973), deCharms (1976), and Muir (1977). Care should be taken, however, not to use these exercises indiscriminately by culling them from their sources and using them verbatim. As deCharms (1973) has noted previously, deliberate intervention is impossible. Every individual, instructor or learner, has a personal choice to make as to whether he or she wants to engage in motivational change or help others to do so. Intrinsic motivation cannot be compulsory.

Summary

Any faithfully applied theoretical framework can add credibility and strength to a curriculum. Teacher education courses have, however, the additional mission of contributing to the future of the schools and the learners who depend on them. Enjoying learning and wanting to pursue knowledge is accomplished best within an atmosphere and setting which is able to sustain motivation. Theories of motivation offer a strong empirical base for accomplishing such goals when the theories are utilized as models and foundations

for the preparation of teachers. By elevating the topic of motivation to an encompassing, theoretical perspective, educational psychology classes can meet the dual objective of instructing motivated students and training motivated teachers. The approach described in this paper ideally can be used not only to provide a theoretical framework for educational psychology, but also a theoretical perspective for teacher education programs.

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